**Activities to Make Test Prep Engaging and Meaningful**

The word ***TEST*** often evokes stress and anxiety among our students. However, there are many ways to ease students’ apprehension and help them feel prepared when end-of-year testing begins. Building experiences for students to engage in effective test preparation can help to defuse anxiety, create familiarity and comfort, offer concrete strategies for success, promote collaboration and problem solving, and open up important conversations around taking standardized tests. Below are several ideas to make test preparation meaningful and engaging so your students (and you) enjoy it.

**1. Play with Question Stems**

Have students create the answer responses to a question stem, thinking carefully about "wrong" answers and finding the right language to construct the "correct" response. This challenges students to really know and understand the concept being addressed in the question.

**2. Flip the Question**

Have students construct the question based on the answer responses. This forces students to identify the patterns and themes evident in the answer responses and thus arrive at the big idea in the question.

**3. Build Your Own Test**

Give the class a mixed up practice test, with the questions scrambled and in no apparent order of difficulty. Have teams of students re-order the questions, moving from easiest to hardest, being prepared to explain and defend why a certain question was easy or difficult. This also invites the important conversation to consider that, when taking a standardized test, all questions are actually equal, with no single question having more value. Many students get hung up on the "hard" question and spend too much time on that one instead of moving through the test to answer the most questions correctly.

**4. Dispute the Answer**

Present students with a test question and offer several possible responses, including correct answers as well as common misconceptions. Have students debate each strategy, piece of student work, or answer and defend which one is correct. Challenge students to rewrite the question in order to make each possible response correct.

**5. The Quiz Show Format**

Play "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" with multiple-choice questions. The popular '90s TV show invited participants to answer a series of questions, sometimes enlisting the help of peers through the "Call a Friend" option, in which the participant could call a friendly source of information. The show also employed the "50/50" option, where two incorrect responses were eliminated from the answer list so that the participant could choose between the last two options. Teachers can break the class into teams to play this game. In a more modern version, the "Call a Friend" option could give students one minute to Google the answer, forcing them to use intelligent search language to find the "right" answer. Students could also text a friend to get extra help.

**6. Sharing Test Taking Strategies**

Have students take a short assessment. Instead of discussing the answers, have students reflect on the test taking strategies they used as they completed the assessment. Create an anchor chart that describes these strategies and refer to them throughout the review time.

Adapted from:

The Importance of Play in Preparing for Standardized Testing by Matt Levinson

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/play-with-standardized-test-prep-matt-levinson>